

their pre-trauma experiences, and through Frierson's excellent interview skills we can see the full range of emotions, feelings and reactions from these victims of the Stalinist system. Frierson does a skilful job in creating a narrative of each and every child survivor and the reader is initiated into a world where initial happiness is eventually crushed by the brutal reality of the Stalinist regime that trusted no one, least of all its own citizens. The book builds a narrative that all children who survived such harrowing circumstances did so due to a tremendous amount of luck and the love and care of their family members, friends and sometimes total strangers. But all these children had to endure the processes of rehabilitation one way or the other and these processes broke their families into pieces and cast them all across the USSR.

Silence Was Salvation breaks new, unexplored ground with its unfiltered examination of the lives of children of these 'traitors to the motherland'. While many testimonies of former political prisoners and other Gulag prisoners form the cornerstone of historical study of the period, Frierson's own contribution to the literature looks at those left behind, those too young to understand Stalinist society but still forced to do so. Some of their life stories have already been published in their own memoirs and autobiographies, but the author takes all these unique yet parallel accounts and puts them in context with each other. The survivors, many of them now over eighty years old, all eventually found work, raised their own families and recounted their stories to the NGO specializing in Soviet repression victims, Memorial. This edition is a valuable contribution to Soviet social history and Gulag testimony, and provides a clear picture of the lives of these orphans, a group which remains insufficiently studied.

Marina Frolova-Walker, *Stalin's Music Prize: Soviet Culture and Politics*, Yale University Press: New Haven, CT, 2016; 384 pp., 20 illus.; 9780300208849, £30.00 (hbk)

Reviewed by: Francis Maes, *Ghent University, Belgium*

Sketching the luxurious living conditions of the Moscow artistic elite involved in the decision-making process of the first Stalin Prize, Marina Frolova-Walker assures the reader that the representatives of the republics did not live in a yurt for the rest of the year. It is but one example of the understated humour with which the author approaches her subject at times. Here is another one: commenting on the prizes earned by the republics, she alludes to the familiar Eurovision Song Contest's *nul points* in the unfortunate record of Kirghizia.

There is more at stake here than a mere demonstration of creative writing skills, though: Frolova-Walker's study of the Stalin Prize is permeated with the joy of discovery. Although the subject is tremendous, since it deals with the machinations of power under a dictatorial regime, the author delights in what she calls time travelling and eavesdropping. The amount of sources in which actual conversations had been preserved verbatim enables the historian a fly-on-the-wall perspective that leads her up to Stalin's writing desk.

The sense of discovery has a personal edge for the author. Raised during the final phase of the Soviet Union's existence, Frolova-Walker has been familiar since childhood with its musical and artistic landscape, the origins of which could be traced back to the period under discussion. Through the use of archival sources, the author is able to correct many mistakes or half-truths about the procedures of the Stalin Prize, and in extension offers new insight into the conflicts between art and power that shaped the conventional historiography of Soviet culture.

The Stalin Prize was announced in 1939 and was first distributed in 1941. It was established to reward excellence in the arts and sciences, but also to encourage artists to continue along a path that served the objectives of the state. The prize brought considerable financial benefit, prestige and career opportunities to its laureates. This study demonstrates how complex the decision-making process actually was. Contrary to the widespread assumption that Stalin could personally distribute prizes at a whim, the actual process was more complex. It was based on a multi-tiered structure, involving professional, state and Party bodies. This study offers a corrective to the popularized image of the Stalinist state as a faceless force of oppression. Frolova-Walker's story carefully avoids the trap of normalizing Stalinist cultural policy too much – the machinations of power remain visible and appear as astonishing as before. However, her account puts personal agency centre stage. The scene was populated with personalities with agendas, whether lofty or mundane, whether based on idealistic, artistic, professional, ideological or political motives, or on personal desires to settle scores with opponents.

Frolova-Walker's study of the Stalin Prize has stimulating consequences for research on Soviet culture. The first is on institutional history. By demonstrating how the interaction between the state and cultural field actually worked in this specific case, the study could have broader resonances on the historical understanding of the relationship between art and power. The second is the definition of a Soviet mainstream, represented in music by composers like Myaskovsky and Kabalevsky. The assessment of their role and influence is vital to transcend the exclusive focus on exceptional personalities like Shostakovich and Prokofiev in standard but largely biased historiography. A third consequence involves a more precise definition of Socialist Realism in music. Musicology has struggled to pin down its defining traits. By demonstrating how Socialist Realism was institutionally practised, Marina Frolova-Walker is able to define which stylistic features were accepted as the core of Socialist Realism and which were relegated to the margins or placed beyond the lines. The book is about music first. In the conclusion, however, the author draws stimulating parallels with sculpture and painting.

Music historians may gain additional insights from this book. It discloses interesting patterns of continuity from pre-revolutionary to Stalinist culture, and/or between the proletarian ideals of the 1920s and the later anti-formalist campaigns. It is also beneficial to encounter Shostakovich in his own milieu, without the filter and prejudices of later ideological and historical discourses. The zigzagging in official recognition of Shostakovich's talent has been known for some time. What is new, however, is the insight into the way Shostakovich's music occupied

the Soviet intelligentsia and how it challenged the ideological edifice. Most refreshing is the chapter in which we hear him speak in his own voice as a member of the Stalin Prize Committee. His words reveal a public temperament, an innate need to speak up, which may also explain some of his most public compositions.

Stephen Gundle, *Mussolini's Dream Factory: Film Stardom in Fascist Italy*, Berghahn: New York, 2013; 336 pp., 20 illus.; 9781782382447, £75.00 (hbk)

Reviewed by: Paul Baxa, Ave Maria University, Florida, USA

In recalling her days as one of Fascist Italy's biggest film stars, Assia Noris was vague on details: 'I remember the line of policemen to protect me when I arrived at the Venice Film Festival and my appearances at the balcony were repeatedly demanded. It was a time of balconies then' (112). Noris' almost flippant remark is consistent with the ambivalent position held by film stars during the *Ventennio*. Despite Mussolini's claim that film was the most important weapon of the state, the Italian film industry was never completely brought under the control of the regime, and much of its production focused on popular fiction films which tried to emulate Hollywood. In this excellent study of film stars under Fascism, Stephen Gundle explores this tenuous relationship between the film industry and Mussolini's regime through the lens of film stars and discovers that, like so many other aspects of the Fascist era, this was yet another example of the regime's inability to fully fascistize society.

The aim of Gundle's book is to understand the place of film stars in Fascist Italy and explore stardom as a 'social practice' (7). Popular culture has been a neglected area in the recent scholarship on Fascist culture. Rather, the focus of this scholarship has rested on areas of cultural and social practice where the regime had a strong imprint, such as architecture or Fascist political spectacles. Much of this neglect has to do with the perception that popular culture remained largely autonomous from the Fascist project. To some extent, Gundle's book confirms this notion with respect to film and its stars, arguing that this was one area where parallel non-Fascist practices thrived under Fascism.

Yet, it would be mistaken to say that Fascism's influence was entirely missing from the film industry and its star system. The merit of Gundle's work is to show that – at times – the interests of the regime and the film industry did converge. The lack of overt political content, and the generally escapist nature of Italian films, did not mean that the industry had no political uses for Mussolini. On the contrary, Gundle demonstrates that there were many areas where the movies that launched the stars of the Fascist era contributed to the Fascist project: 'Cinema may have corresponded to logics that in important respects were different from those of the regime, but it cannot seriously be denied that it made some contribution to the way society was organized and regulated' (25).

Gundle's book is divided into three parts. The first part gives an overview of the film industry under the regime, and the development of the star system. Although